

HURRICANE KATRINA

General Services Administration Office of Travel, Transportation and Asset Management

This document provides information to Federal employees who are in an official travel status, and the Agency travel managers. The Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) provides flexibility to Executive agencies to accommodate many travel and transportation scenarios including unique or special circumstances resulting from Hurricane Katrina. The following are questions and answers to assist agencies and those affected employees relating to this unique situation. The FTR is available on line at www.gsa.gov/ftr.

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is responsible for the regulations for the Federal employees who have been impacted by Hurricane Katrina. For specific information concerning this authority and the computation of applicable expenses, please see 5 CFR § 550.405. Also, there is additional information on OPM's website at www.opm.gov - Hurricane Katrina.

Questions and answers per the FTR:

Traveler: Are there any other expenses, not specifically identified as official travel expenses that my agency may authorize/approve, that may be charged to my Government Contractor-Issued Travel Charge Card?

Response: You may use the Travel Charge Card for other expenses that are necessary to perform the official travel assignment. Examples of expenses which may be charged to the Travel Charge Card include but are not limited to:

- Special clothing, boots required by the employee to perform the travel assignment;
- Portable beds, bedding, folding cots, sleeping bags for use by the employee if such bedding is unavailable at the place of lodging;
- Flashlights and batteries;
- Gas cans when necessary to carry fuel for rental vehicles;
- Bottled water, towels (paper/cloth), sanitizing wipes;
- Other miscellaneous expenses not included in the FTR or stated herein, when necessarily incurred by the Federal traveler in connection with the transaction of official travel shall be allowed when approved.

There may be other expenses incidental to official travel and necessary for the fulfillment of the agency's mission, for which you may use your Government contractor-issued travel charge card. It should be noted that these expenses are permitted only for you on official business travel. You need to be aware when the travel charge card is used for these expenses, you are personally responsible for payment of all charges on the travel card even if the expenses are not reimbursable.

Agency: What should we do if the use of the Government charge card at certain merchants is blocked by agency policy?

Response: In view of the nature and destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina you should take the necessary steps to remove the merchant block codes with charge card vendors, when warranted and appropriate, to ensure that your Federal travelers may charge travel related items necessary to complete the mission of the agency.

Traveler: Is it permissible to use my Government contractor-issued travel charge card to pay the expenses of other individuals?

Response: No

Traveler: If conventional lodging is not available, what will my Agency reimburse me?

Response: Pursuant to FTR § 301-11.12, your agency will reimburse you for different types of lodging as follows:

(a) *Government quarters.* You will be reimbursed, as a lodging expense, the fee or service charge you pay for use of the quarters.

(b) *Lodging with friend(s) or relative(s) (with or without charge).* You may be reimbursed for additional costs your host incurs in accommodating you only if you are able to substantiate the costs and your agency determines them to be reasonable. You will not be reimbursed the cost of comparable conventional lodging in the area or a flat "token" amount.

(c) *Nonconventional lodging.* You may be reimbursed the cost of other types of lodging when conventional facilities are in short supply because of natural disaster or other catastrophic events. Such lodging includes college dormitories or similar facilities or rooms not offered commercially but made available to the public by area residents in their homes.

(d) *Recreational vehicle (trailer/camper).* You may be reimbursed for expenses (parking fees, fees for connection, use and disconnection of utilities, electricity, gas, water and sewage, bath or shower fees, and dumping fees) which may be considered as a lodging cost.

Traveler: If I am authorized to rent a RV/trailer/camper for lodging may my agency authorize me to rent a car necessary to tow the RV/trailer/camper?

Response: Yes, if your agency authorizes an RV/trailer/camper as a special conveyance pursuant to FTR § 301-10-.400, your agency may also authorize you to rent an automobile to tow the RV/trailer/camper when determined to be advantageous to the Government and necessary to accomplish the mission of your agency.

Agency: What expenses are required to be itemized under an actual expenses authorization?

Response: There are 2-options to authorize reimbursement on an actual expenses basis, not to exceed 300 percent of the applicable maximum per diem rate.

Option 1. Actual expenses for lodging, meals and incidental expense. In this instance the employee is required to itemize all incurred expenses on a daily basis, including lodging, taxes, breakfast, lunch, dinner and any other expenses incurred daily. Expenses not incurred on a daily basis may be averaged over the days of the official travel assignment.

Option 2. Actual expense for lodging only and the meals and incidental expenses (M&IE) are paid on a per diem basis. In this instance itemization of lodging is required and the lodging receipt serves as the itemized statement. As an example, under this scenario the maximum benefit is given to the lodging expenses and is computed as follows:

Maximum per diem rate is \$180.00 (\$133 for lodging plus \$47 for M&IE).
\$180.00 times 300 percent equals \$540.00 minus \$47 (M&IE paid on per diem basis) equals \$493.00 for lodging.

Agency: In view of the destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina and the necessity to evacuate Federal employees to safe havens and the uncertainty of when such employees will be returned to their official duty station, what are the options for the evacuated employees to perform the duties of the agency at other locations?

Response. The two options to consider under the provisions of the FTR are:

Option 1. Placing the employee on a temporary duty status, away from their official duty station, at a location designated by the agency. In this instance the employee would be entitled to per diem allowance (lodging and M&IE) for the location of the assignment. In addition the employee may be authorized the use of a rental vehicle. Under this option there is no legal authority to pay a per diem allowance for family members that were evacuated with the employee; however, under 5 U.S.C. § 5725

agencies may pay for the transportation of immediate family members and household goods, where applicable.

Option 2. Issuing a Temporary Change of Station (TCS). For the affected employee under this option the employee's official duty station would be changed on a temporary basis to the safe haven or other location designated by the agency. In this instance the employee would be entitled to the following:

Table H: Temporary Change of Station (TCS)

| Column 1— Relocation allowances that agency must pay or reimburse | Column 2— Relocation allowances that agency has discretionary authority to pay or reimburse |
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| (1) Transportation & per diem for employee & immediate family member(s) (Part 302-4 of this chapter). | (1) Househunting trip expenses (Part 302-5 of this chapter). |
| (2) Miscellaneous expense allowance (Part 302-16 of this chapter). | (2) Temporary quarters subsistence expense (TQSE) (Part 302-6 of this chapter). |
| (3) Transportation & temporary storage of household goods (Part 302-7 of this chapter). | |
| (4) Transportation of a mobile home or boat used as a primary residence in lieu of the transportation of household goods (Part 302-10 of this chapter). | |
| (5) Transportation of a privately owned vehicle (POV) (Subpart B of Part 302-9 of this chapter). | |
| (6) Relocation income tax allowance (RITA) (Part 302-17 of this chapter). | |
| (7) Property management services (Part 302-15 of this chapter). | |

Under this option the employee would be reimbursed some of the expenses incurred for family members evacuated along with the employee.

Traveler/Agency: Who in GSA should we contact if we have additional travel questions relating to Hurricane Katrina?

Response: Peggy DeProspero – Travel Program Director – 202-501-2826 or
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James Harte - Travel Program Expert – 202-501-0483 or
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